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R 290938Z SEP 09
FM AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0810
RUEHPNH/NVC PORTSMOUTH 0001
INFO ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE
GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 0053

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 MUSCAT 001000

SIPDIS
DEPT ALSO PASS TO KCC
POSTS FOR FRAUD PREVENTION MANAGERS
ATHENS FOR DHS/ICE AND DHS/CIS
ROME FOR DHS/ICE, DHS/CIS AND DHS/CBP
DHS FOR CIS/FDNS
CA/FPP FOR S. SEXTON
CAIRO FOR RCO ROWAN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [CVIS](#) [KFRD](#) [CPAS](#) [CMGT](#) [ASEC](#)
SUBJECT: FRAUD SUMMARY - MUSCAT

REF: (A) 09 STATE 57623

¶A. (U) COUNTRY CONDITIONS: Oman's population is estimated to be 3.3 million including 900,000 expatriates according to the State Department's 2009 Human Rights report. The CIA World Factbook estimates Oman's population to be 3,418,085, which includes 577,293 non-nationals in its latest on-line update (July 2009 estimate).

Oman's long history of trading between the east coast of Africa and the Indian subcontinent has produced considerable ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity in the population, although a majority of Omani citizens are ethnically Arab. Arabic is the official and most widely spoken language. English, Hindi, Urdu, Swahili, Baluchi, Loti, Telagu, Malayalam, and local dialects are also used. Many government officials and most merchants dealing with the expatriate community speak English.

Like other countries in the region, Oman relies on imported labor to support and carry out its development plans. With ambitious public works, tourism, and industrial projects begun throughout the Sultanate, the last two years have seen a rapid increase in the number of expatriates working in the Sultanate. According to the most recent Omani Central Bank figures, the expatriate workforce was approximately 680,100 in March 2008, up from 511,000 in 2006. While a substantial increase, indications from several sources suggest the official number of expatriate workers in the Sultanate is understated. Americans hold a handful of positions in the private sector, mostly in the oil, education and banking sectors, but technical advisers and managers are mostly from Europe and the Indian subcontinent. Although the majority of third country nationals come to Oman to work, some transit illegally to other countries.

The majority of third country national (TCN) NIV applicants are from Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Sudan, and Syria.

The overall level of fraud at post is low.

¶B. (U) NIV FRAUD: Post adjudicated approximately 3,415 non-immigrant visas from March 2009 to August 2009. Fifty eight

percent of these were B1/B2 applications from Omanis and Indians traveling to the U.S. as visitors or for business and training sponsored by employers in Oman. The refusal rate for all applicants was 23 percent. The refusal rate for Omani NIV applicants was 0.80 percent. Post encounters little or no fraud with citizens of Oman. Among the expatriate community, the fraud generally appears to be unsophisticated. Consular officers continue to depend on both interviewing techniques and document examination to adjudicate NIV applicants.

Occasionally, the consular section receives reports of visa applicants who have been duped into paying large sums of money to individuals claiming to represent the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS), the National Visa Center (NVC), or another visa office. During this quarter, at least four such cases came to the consular section's attention. In one case, a visa applicant told post he paid approximately USD 1,150 to a London-based USCIS office and wanted to verify its authenticity. Post contacted Embassy London's Fraud Prevention Unit (FPU), and it asked the London community police to investigate the office's address and phone number. In another similar case, an Omani national reported that he paid for three green cards he hoped to sell to expatriate workers registered under his sponsorship. As a result of the increase in incidents of these scams, Embassy Muscat issued a press release warning the public about possible scams and reminding them that visa forms are free. Both English and Arabic

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language dailies in Muscat published the information.

Consistent with the William Wilberforce Anti-Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008, Post continues to adhere to the Department's policy of requiring a signed contract between employers and their domestic employees in both English and a language that the employee reads and understands. Interviewing consular officers question employers and employees to determine whether they met past contractual obligations. They also ask them to provide proof of past payment. Post refused one A3 case under Section 221(g) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) when the consular officer learned that the domestic employee may have received wages far below what was agreed upon in the contract. When the consular officer raised the issue with the diplomat employer, he abruptly left the interview and later complained to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). The case is still refused pending documentation. The Consular Chief and the Deputy Chief of Mission met with officials at the Omani MFA to explain the USG commitment to combating human trafficking and labor rights violations. The Consular Chief provided the MFA with the Wilberforce brochure and a non-paper on the subject. In addition, the consulate has created a contract template, which is currently in the clearance process.

Post also scrutinizes domestic visa applications, especially for A3 and B1 domestic employees, to ensure that the employer and employee are in compliance with Wilberforce. All employment category non-immigrants are provided with the Wilberforce brochure prior to their interviews. During the interview, consular officers ask employees whether they have read the brochure and ask them a few questions to ensure that they have understood it. Often consular officers find it necessary to explain the main points of the brochure. In several cases, consular officers arranged verbal translation of the brochure to ensure the applicants understood its contents.

IC. (U) IV FRAUD: Post processed 30 immigrant visa (IV) petitions during this reporting period. All of the applicants were long term residents of Oman in the immediate relative and family-based categories.

ID. (U) DV FRAUD: During this period, a total of 13 diversity visas (DVs) were processed and issued to TCNs from Sudan, Burma and Sri Lanka. One incident of fraud was encountered. A Bangladeshi male applied for a Diversity Visa for himself and his family. Upon examination of the application, it became apparent that the photos were of different individuals. When questioned as to why the pictures did not match, he responded, "Please help me." To combat a spate of reports regarding DV visa scams in Oman, post issued a press release on July 11, 2009, reminding citizens and residents of Oman to use caution when being asked to pay for forms or processing fees.

IE. (U) ACS AND US PASSPORT FRAUD: The American Citizen Services unit did not encounter any incidents of ACS fraud.

IF. (U) ADOPTION FRAUD: None. Post received no adoption applications during this period. Only Muslims are permitted to adopt in Oman.

IG. (U) USE OF DNA TESTING: Post did not recommend any cases for DNA testing during this period.

IH. (U) ASYLUM AND OTHER DHS BENEFIT FRAUD: Post did not process MUSCAT 00001000 003 OF 003

any cases during this period.

II. (U) ALIEN SMUGGLING, TRAFFICKING, ORGANIZED CRIME, TERRORIST TRAVEL: No cases were reported for the period.

IJ. (U) DS CRIMINAL FRAUD INVESTIGATION: No cases were investigated during this period.

IK. (U) HOST COUNTRY PASSPORT IDENTITY DOCUMENTS, AND CIVIL REGISTRY: Oman maintains a national identity card for both Omani citizens and expatriates. The issuance of both the ID card and the passport are tightly controlled. In addition, as a result of the computerization and centralization of civil documents in Oman, birth, death, marriage, and divorce records are easily verifiable and under close and constant control. Post has occasionally seen different birthdates for the same individual in different Omani passports. Post believes the incidence of these different birthdates relates more to data entry than fraud. In addition, many older Omanis born before 1970 do not have birth certificates and are often unsure of their exact birthdate. Post is not aware of any fraud related to host country passport identity documents or any civil registry fraud.

Post has encountered two instances of children born out of wedlock to non-Omani couples. Although this is strictly illegal in Oman, both couples were assumed to be married when attending doctor's appointments and entering the hospital for the birth of the children.

IL. (U) COOPERATION WITH HOST GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES: The embassy has excellent relations with the Royal Oman Police (ROP) and the

consular department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). The ROP and MFA communicate with the embassy whenever they encounter fraud that impacts the embassy's operations.

1M. (U) AREAS OF PARTICULAR CONCERN: None.

1N. (U) STAFFING AND TRAINING: The Fraud Prevention Manager is Vice Consul Stephen F. Ibelli. The consular section has sent one Omani staff member to fraud prevention training in Washington and hopes to send another in the near future.

Schmierer